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CYCLONE REMAL LEAVES TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION IN BENGAL, FOUR KILLED
Strong winds blew away roofs of huts and knocked down power poles, while accompanying downpour caused waterlogging in many areas

RAINS TO CONTINUE TILL TUESDAY MORNING

The cyclone ravaged adjacent coasts of West Bengal and Bangladesh between Sagar Island and Khepupara after its landfall process began around 8.30 pm on Sunday. After a night of heavy rainfall, several areas of Kolkata remained inundated. More rainfall is on the cards, not only in the metropolis but also in other parts of the state till Tuesday morning, which may hamper relief works

FLIGHT SERVICES RESUME AFTER 21 HOURS

The deaths mostly occurred due to the collapse of roofs and walls of houses due to strong winds and relentless downpours. People have been urged to remain indoors as heavy rain persists in many areas
Flight services at the Kolkata airport resumed on Monday morning after remaining suspended for 21 hours because of the cyclone [P12]

135 kmph

MAXIMUM WIND SPEED RECORDED AS THE CYCLONE TORE THROUGH BENGAL COAST

BBMP move to hire teachers through security firms draws flak

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

THE BBMP's decision to hire teachers to its schools through private security and detective agencies has drawn flak not only from the teaching community, but also from activists and politicians. However, BBMP chief commissioner Tushar Girinath has defended the decision.

Appu Detective and Security Services for South Zone and RR Nagar, Detectwell Security Services Private Limited for East Zone, and Sharp Watch Investigating Security Services Private Limited for West Zone have been reportedly given tenders to hire teachers.

Responding to the BBMP decision, Veeresh Nayak, vice-president of the BBMP Contract Teachers' Association, said if teachers are hired by these agencies, their salary will be reduced by Rs 1,000-3,000. Nearly 700 teachers appointed on a contract basis in BBMP schools will be impacted.

"The agencies have started collecting documents from those aspiring for posts of teacher in BBMP schools. Sensing trouble, we approached MLC Puttanna recently, who promised us to look into the matter," Nayak said. [P2]

Will go before SIT on May 31: Prajwal in video

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

HASSAN MP Prajwal Revanna, who is wanted by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the sexual abuse cases against him, posted a 2.57-minute video on Monday stating that he will appear before the SIT at 10 am on Friday (May 31). Prajwal fled the country on April 27, just a day before a sexual harassment case was registered against him at Holenarasipura Town police station in Hassan district.

In the video posted from an undisclosed location, Prajwal tendered apologies to his grandfather and JDS supremo HD Deve Gow-

da, his parents MLA HD Revanna and Bhavani Revanna, his uncle and former chief minister HD Kumaraswamy, people of Karnataka and JDS workers for his actions.

He stated that his travel abroad was preplanned and he left immediately after exercising his franchise in the Lok Sabha elections on April 26.

"When I left the country, neither a case was there against me nor the SIT was formed. After four days of my stay abroad, I got to know about the case against me and the formation of SIT, while

watching news on YouTube. Subsequently, a notice was served against me by the SIT and I had sought a week's time to appear before it, through X and also through one of my advocates," Prajwal said.

"I went into a state of depression and isolation after many Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, started discussing this issue on open platforms. Some forces in Hassan joined hands and started conspiring against me. I was shocked as all of them had meticulously planned to involve me in some cases as I am



Video grab of Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna

Lost faith in state machinery: Guj HC

Roasts Rajkot civic body for not enforcing fire safety rules

DILIP SINGH KSHATRIYA
@Ahmedabad

THE Gujarat High Court on Monday hit out at the Rajkot Municipal Corporation and the state government, saying it has lost faith in the state machinery that turns a blind eye to illegal structures and wakes up only after innocent lives are lost.

The sharp remarks came a day after the HC took suo-motu note of the blaze at the TRP Game Zone in Rajkot on Saturday evening, which killed at least 28 people. The game zone did not have the fire NOC or other crucial permissions.

A special bench of justices Biren Vaishnav and Devan Desai asked the Rajkot civic body why it allowed the game zone to run. The bench was furious when it was told the operators did not apply for permissions. "Were you blind to the existence of this large structure? How do you explain that the entire zone has existed for the last two-and-a-half years? What fire safety measures were applied?" it asked.

When a counsel pointed out that drastic actions must be taken to avoid such incidents in future, the bench



said: "Who will take such drastic steps? Frankly, we no longer have faith in the state machinery. This is the sixth incident in four years after our orders and their assurances. They only act after lives are lost."

The HC posed a volley of questions to the corporation's counsel, asking why were the court's earlier orders on fire safety norms not followed.

During the hearing, the bench examined photographs showing Rajkot government officials being present at the gaming zone inauguration. "Who were these officers? Were they there for play? Can we not take judicial notice of that fact? For 18 months, what did the corporation do? Just sit on it?" the bench questioned.

On Monday the Gujarat government suspended five officials from various departments, including two police inspectors, for negligence in the Rajkot fire tragedy.

Debris being removed from the game zone site in Rajkot, where 28 died in a blaze [P11]

Notice to past Rajkot officials

The HC noted that every municipal commissioner starting from the establishment of the TRP Game Zone in 2021 up to the time of the incident "should be held responsible for the tragedy". It instructed them to provide individual affidavits

ST Corp'n official ends life, blames MD, 2 others

FIR AGAINST 3

Vinobanagar police filed an FIR against JG Padmanabha, Parashurama G Durgannanavar, and Shuchismita Ravul on Monday in connection with the suicide. The FIR was filed based on a complaint by Kavitha, Chandrashekharan's wife.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Shivamogga

SUPERINTENDENT of Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation Ltd (KMVSTDCL) P Chandrashekharan, 48, ended his life by hanging at his house here on Sunday.

Chandrashekharan, who hailed from Shivamogga city, worked at the head office of the corporation (KMVSTDCL) at Vasant Nagar in Bengaluru.

In a note, Chandrashekharan blamed JG Padmanabha, managing director of KMVSTDCL, and his associates Parashurama G Durgannanavar, accounts officer of KMVSTDCL, and Shuchismita Ravul, an officer of a public sector bank's branch on MG Road in Bengaluru, for his death.

In the note, he stated that he got a direction (an oral instruction from the minister concerned) to transfer mon-

ey from the corporation to an account in the public sector bank.

Subsequently, Rs 25 crore was transferred to the account on March 4, Rs 25 crore on March 6, Rs 44 crore on March 21, Rs 43.33 crore from the state's treasury account, and Rs 50 crore on May 21. Pad-

manabha used to exert pressure to transfer the money, he alleged.



CONTINUED ON: P4

EXPRESS READ

State to pay ₹80L, NTC clears ₹3.33-cr dues

Bengaluru: Forest Minister Eshwar Khadke said the state will clear the pending bill of Rs 80 lakh to Radisson Blu hotel in Mysuru, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi had stayed. Meanwhile, sources said the pending amount of Rs 3.33 crore was transferred to the Bandipur Tiger Foundation on Monday [P5]

Padma winner to return award over Naxal threat

Narayanpur: Traditional medicine practitioner Hemchand Manjhi, renowned for his stellar work from a remote village in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district, on Monday said he will return his Padma Shri award, after he received threats from Naxalites [P9]

Jadavpur joust is on a razor's edge

SULAGNA SENGUPTA @Kolkata

THE Jadavpur parliamentary constituency is known for its cerebral power as it often sends luminaries to the Lok Sabha. For example, way back in 1984, current Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrested the seat on a Congress ticket from CPM stalwart Somnath Chatterjee.

This time around, it could be a toss up between the Trinamool's Saayoni Ghosh, the CPM's Srijan Bhattacharyya and the BJP's Anirban Ganguly because the race is that tight. All three are alumni of Jadavpur University. At 47, Dr Ganguly is the eldest of them. Saayoni and Srijan are 31.

Saayoni became the Trinamool Congress youth wing head after Mamata's nephew and party general secretary Abhishek Banerjee vacated the position in 2021. An actor by profession, she got the moniker of a party streetfighter from Mamata.

Srijan is member of the CPM's West Bengal State Committee. He was the State Secretary of the Students' Federation of India for just over six years till January last. As for Dr Ganguly, he is an academic and chair-

man of the BJP's Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation.

While Saayoni parrots Mamata's seamless connect with the grassroots, adding she introduced various innovative schemes for the upliftment of the poor, Ganguly hammers away at the TMC's scams under Mamata's watch and her attempts to shield her tainted party leaders.

Saayoni models herself on Mamata's brand of politics, saying: "I've learned that real politics is different from what's in the textbooks. A true leader understands the people's needs and struggles, just like Mamata. A leader must be accessible, and I am here for Jadavpur." Her political

journey began in February 2021 when she joined the TMC and unsuccessfully contested for the Asansol South assembly seat.

In contrast, Srijan has been in politics for a long time. He promises to introduce more industries and bring back jobs to the state that were chased away by the current regime. He flogs the Singur example where the then CPM chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya invited the Tatas to set up their Nano plant, but they were driven away by Mamata's activism.

Ganguly is seen mobilising people from other districts for large road shows and rallies with posters and banners in a demonstration of strength across the constituency. Sobha Rani Deb, a senior voter in Baghajatin area of Jadavpur is critical of Ganguly's mobilisation. "This is an election, not a festival. Ganguly's road shows often end up in creating traffic bottlenecks," she rued.

The Jadavpur Lok Sabha constituency includes Baruipur Purbha (Scheduled Caste), Baruipur Paschim, Sonarpur, Bhangar, Jadavpur, Sonarpur Uttar and Tollygunge assembly segments. It falls within the 24 Parganas district, which is the sixth-most densely populated in India.

From left, Srijan Bhattacharyya, Saayoni Ghosh and Dr Anirban Ganguly



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